



Dear Senator Marilyn Moore, Representative Catherine Abercrombie, and Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

Our names are James Bhandary-Alexander, Jacqui Oesterblad, and Poonam Daryani. We are, respectively, a clinical lecturer and two law students at Yale Law School. We are also the Legal Director and two of the current Student Directors of HAVEN Clinic's Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP).

Established in 2005, HAVEN Free Clinic is a student-run primary care clinic providing free, comprehensive medical, legal, and social services to uninsured adults residing in New Haven. The MLP works to address underlying causes of patients' healthcare needs by providing free legal screenings and services. We help patients with civil legal needs relating to family law, immigration, public benefits, employment, and housing. Because being uninsured is a requirement for care at HAVEN Clinic, the majority of the patients we encounter in the MLP are immigrants, many of whom are undocumented.

We write to express our unequivocal support for SB284. Expanding access to HUSKY for people up to age 18, regardless of immigration status, is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. Through our work with uninsured immigrants in HAVEN, we have seen the downstream costs of denying care to an essential segment of our community. We also realize that the work doesn't end here: We support future legislation to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to undocumented residents of all ages, including parents and adults.

The laws and policies that you vote on in this committee are themselves [social determinants of health](#)—meaning they have a significant impact on health risks and outcomes. The committee has an opportunity to enact a law that would directly impact the health of our immigrant communities by increasing healthcare access. The CDC recognizes [healthcare access as a social determinant of health](#) and specifically identifies health insurance coverage as a critical component of healthcare access. Passing SB284 is necessary to ensure that people historically marginalized in our healthcare system are able to receive the services and medications they need. Our laws must promote and protect health—not thwart it.

We support SB284 and expanded HUSKY access because we clearly see how much our MLP patients and their families stand to benefit. One of our patients has a young adult child, Y., with complex medical needs related to his developmental disabilities. Throughout Y.'s childhood, his family was unable to afford much of the care and services that he needed. His family asked us for help, but there was little we could do to help him access that care, because of his immigration status. Passing SB284 would directly enable youth like Y. to access life-sustaining healthcare that, in turn, enables them to become healthier, more productive adults.

This week, we are helping another one of our clients, L.—a pregnant, undocumented worker who experienced employment discrimination—apply for HUSKY A coverage. This is possible only because in 2021 the General Assembly expanded access to HUSKY to undocumented children ages 0-8 and pregnant and postpartum individuals up to one-year post-birth. We are grateful that L. has a health insurance option for the immediate future. However, our client's situation also reveals the limits to the law passed last year and the need for a long-term plan to make HUSKY accessible to our entire immigrant community. Because of the current limits on HUSKY eligibility, our client will likely lose health insurance only one-year postpartum. If we want healthy children, the best way to achieve that is to have healthy parents—but

currently, we're leaving undocumented parents behind. When parents and caregivers have access to health care, their children are more likely to be insured and to use and receive care.

We support S.B. 284 and ask the committee to pass this legislation. Looking forward, we implore the committee to work towards opening access to all residents of Connecticut, regardless of age or status.

Thank you for your time,

James Bhandary-Alexander
Poonam Daryani
Jacqui Oesterblad
HAVEN Clinic Medical-Legal Partnership